



**United States
Department
of
Agriculture**

**Forest
Service**

**Idaho
Panhandle
National
Forests**

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File Code: 1950

Date: September 14, 2009

SCOPING NOTICE

PROJECT NAME: NORTH ZONE ROADSIDE SALVAGE PROJECT

To: Interested Members of the Public,

The North Zone of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, which includes the Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint and Priest Lake Ranger Districts that are located within Boundary and Bonner Counties, Idaho; Pend Oreille County, Washington and; Lincoln County, MT has initiated an environmental analysis for the North Zone Roadside Salvage Project.

At this early stage of the project development, we are soliciting public input in order to determine what key issues the public may have about the project so the interdisciplinary team (IDT) can focus on those issues for developing and analyzing the possible effects from implementing the project. Alternative treatment methods will be developed and analyzed based on your comments and suggestions. The alternatives will be designed to accomplish the purpose and need of the project. This information will help us select the alternative that best meets the purpose and need while addressing key issues and concerns.

The project area is located along approximately 600 miles of specific state, county and forest system roads that pass through National Forest lands (about 200 miles on each district). The project encompasses approximately 20,000 acres restricted to those areas that are within 200 feet of the associated road shoulders. The project will be designed to complete about 40 miles of work per district per year over a five-year time period.

Actions that are being considered in the project area include: salvage of dead standing, down and incidental live hazard trees within 200 feet of specific road shoulders and; clearing of vegetative in-growth within cut/fill slopes on roads that are maintained by the Forest Service. Project "design criteria" are being used to further narrow the specific road locations included in this project. Detailed descriptions of these criteria are included in this scoping letter, and may be modified during the project analysis phase based on continuing resource specialist and public input.

Purpose and Need

Dead standing, blown-down or root-sprung live leaning trees resulting from weather events, insect and disease mortality are often located on or immediately adjacent to state, county and forest-system roads that pass through national forest lands administered by the Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint and Priest Lake Ranger Districts of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests (IPNF).

These trees provide an opportunity to employ small-scale loggers or commercial firewood cutters to salvage these trees, without using off-road equipment, for the benefit of the local economy, to provide wood products for societal use and also to help make forest roads safer for public use.

Additionally, many of the roads within the project area that were built by the Forest Service have not been maintained frequently enough to prevent small trees and brush from becoming reestablished within the original construction clearing limits. This situation can create unsafe driving conditions such as blind spots and preventing adequate space to plow snow off the road surface if needed for management or general public travel during winter months. Some of this vegetation that needs to be removed could be commercially utilized as sawlogs, pulplogs, posts and biomass for energy.

Some road segments may also need to have ditch relief pipes and culverts replaced and ditch lines reestablished to restore or improve drainage off the road surface, and spot gravel applications and blading to restore the road surface to original specifications.

The purpose and need, or objectives, for entering the North Zone Roadside Salvage Project area is to:

- Accomplish road maintenance work of felling hazard trees and clearing vegetation from cut/fill slopes to improve public safety on included roads and to also improve road surface conditions and drainage by upgrading or cleaning out ditch relief pipes and culverts, reestablishing ditch lines, spot gravel placement and blading roads.
- Provide jobs for small-scale loggers and firewood cutters located in the communities of Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, Priest River and outlying areas.
- Provide wood products for societal use from salvaging dead standing, down and hazard trees within 200 feet of included roadsides and from cutting and removing useable live vegetative in-growth within maintenance clearing limits of included roads.

The proposed action for this project includes the following:

At this phase of the project, we currently have identified approximately 1,200 miles of roads that could be included in the project area. However, in order to design this project to benefit mostly small-scale business people within the three communities while efficiently containing the level of analysis required for a project that could reasonably be completed within a five-

year time period, the IDT has selected about 600 miles of road segments within the 1,200 miles initially mapped.

The road segments were selected based on a combination of reasons including: a desire to keep the project analysis as simple and non-controversial as possible for small-scale salvage logging; to work along mostly open roads that receive the most traffic and therefore have priority needs for removing blowdown off of road prisms and; to restore sight distances for safety purposes.

The project area has been identified through internal scoping and integration of other resource management objectives. These other objectives consider the need to protect resources such as riparian habitat, old-growth timber stands, sensitive land types, Threatened or Endangered species and their habitat, visual resources, recreation and cultural resources and many other resources. As we collect public comments and conduct further analysis within the project area, the treatments and treatment areas may change slightly. Refer to the attached general vicinity maps and road segments table for locations of roads that are being proposed for inclusion with this project.

The proposed action would include the following activities and areas:

- Roads in the project area include specific state, county and forest system segments that pass through National Forest lands and include currently drivable open and seasonally closed roads and roads that we want to maintain as drivable but may be brushed in due to lack of maintenance funding. With few exceptions, most non-system-type roads are not included in the project.
- Salvage operations would be conducted along-side about 440 of the 600 total miles in the project area and would not include machinery use off-road. Salvage would be accomplished by having equipment remain on the road surfaces and winching dead standing, down and hazard trees to the roadside that are within 200 feet of the road shoulders.
- Salvage material includes only dead standing and down trees within 200 feet of road shoulders, with the exception of incidental live "hazard trees" that could also be cut if they pose a public safety threat of falling on the road surface (i.e. root sprung or excessive leaning trees or live trees with dead tops that could fall on the road surface).
- Road maintenance work along-side 600 miles of road would include: cutting and removal of utilizable brush and trees within the maintenance clearing limits, which is about 10-20 feet off road shoulders; ditch work; relief pipe and culvert cleaning or replacements and; spot graveling and blading. Note: the 440 miles of roadside salvage would take place within portions of the same 600 miles of roadside included for the maintenance clearing work.

- Forest products will be utilized to the fullest extent possible and will include sawlogs, pulplogs, commercial firewood, biomass for energy, posts, poles, cedar products and any other product that could have value and promote community stability.
- It is anticipated that about 40 miles (about 1,933 acres) per district per year (120 miles or 5,818 acres across the three districts total per year) of roadside salvage and vegetation removals for road maintenance purposes would be accomplished over a five-year period.

Multiple small salvage sales, service contracts or stewardship contracts will be used to accomplish the work. Total mileage within the project area is about 600 miles. Each segment is listed and mapped in Table 1 and Maps Numbered 1, 2 and 3, which are included in this letter.

Project design restrictions:

The current project proposal includes the following criteria that are designed to restrict or completely eliminate activities from the following areas or circumstances:

- Where the roads pass through seasonally wet draws, activities will be restricted to the road surface and within the normal cut/fill clearing limits. No hazard trees will be removed beyond the clearing limits if located within 50 feet of wet draws. If hazard trees must be cut in these areas for public safety, they will be left on the ground.
- Within all other Riparian Habitat Conservation Area (RHCA) and Inland Native Fish Habitat (INFSH) buffer zones, activities will be restricted to the road surface and within the normal cut/fill clearing limits. No salvage operations or hazard tree removals beyond the clearing limits will occur if located within these buffer zones. If hazard trees must be cut in these areas for public safety, they will be left on the ground.
- Roads located within Bear Management Units (BMUs) that are not currently drivable will not be opened up.
- Project activities within BMUs would be coordinated and timed with other annual forest management activities to maintain forest plan standards for bear security.
- Where the roads pass through allocated old growth stands, activities will be restricted to the road surface and cut and fill slopes. No hazard trees will be removed beyond the cut/fill slope in allocated old growth stands. If hazard trees must be cut in these areas for public safety, they must be left on the ground. Salvage of dead standing and down trees will not occur in allocated old-growth stands.
- Slash created as a result of salvage and road maintenance activities that is excess to other resource needs, such as for soil management objectives, would be utilized to the fullest extent feasible, or piled (mechanical or hand), or lopped and scattered in areas where slash levels are low. Piling equipment will remain on the road surface or within the ditch line, while further reaches would be hand-piled.

- Prescribed burning of piles would be conducted at times and under conditions that would minimize or prevent accumulation of smoke to such degree as necessary to meet State and Federal ambient air quality standards.
- To minimize soil disturbance from burning, piles would be small (i.e. about 9 feet wide by 6 feet tall) and burned when soil moistures are at least 25%.

Your Opportunity to Comment

You are encouraged to take advantage of this scoping period if you have any concerns or suggestions about this project proposal and how it is being designed to meet the stated purpose and need. To be most effective, please submit your comments no later than **October 18, 2009**. Comments may be submitted after that date but may not be received in time for full consideration during analysis and prior to release of the Environmental Assessment.

This scoping period is being provided to those interested in or potentially affected by this proposal so the project Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) can better identify key issues during the analysis phase of this project. Following completion of the environmental analysis and before a decision is made to implement this project, a 30-day comment period will be provided to those who have commented on or wish to participate in this project development process. The Responsible Official for implementing this project will be Ranotta McNair, Forest Supervisor.

Comments received in response to this scoping letter, including names and addresses of those who comment, will be considered part of the public record and will be available for public inspection.

Written, facsimile, hand-delivered, oral, and electronic comments will be accepted.

Written comments should be addressed to the Responsible Official, Ranotta McNair, Forest Supervisor and submitted to: Barry Wynsma, project leader or at the Front Desk of the Bonners Ferry Ranger District, 6286 Main Street, Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805; Phone: (208) 267-5561; Fax: (208) 267-3732. The office business hours for those submitting hand-delivered or oral comments are: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, excluding holidays.

Electronic comments must be submitted in rich text format (.rtf), or Word (.doc) to comments-northern-idpanhandle-bonners-ferry@fs.fed.us. The subject line must contain the name of the project for which you are submitting comments. Acceptable formats are MS Word, Word Perfect, or RTF. For electronically mailed comments, the sender should normally receive an automated electronic acknowledgement from the agency as confirmation of receipt. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Those people providing comments should include: (1) their name, address, telephone number, organization represented, if any; (2) title of the document on which the comment is being submitted; and (3) your issues, suggestions or concerns about the project for the IDT

and Responsible Official to consider. Copies of the future environmental analysis documentation will be mailed to those people who have submitted comments and to those who request a copy.

Additionally, pursuant to 7 CFR 1.27(d), any person may request the agency to withhold a submission from the public record by showing how the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) permits such confidentiality. Persons requesting such confidentiality should be aware that, under FOIA, confidentiality may be granted in only very limited circumstances, such as to protect trade secrets. The Forest Service will inform the requester of the agency's decision regarding the request for confidentiality, and where the request is denied, the agency will return the submission and notify the requester that the comments may be resubmitted with or without name and address within a specified time.

If you need additional information regarding this proposal please contact Barry Wynsma, project leader, at the Bonners Ferry Ranger District.

Signed by Linda McFaddan

LINDA MCFADDAN for North Zone Rangers
District Ranger
Bonners Ferry RD, IPNF

Attachments (5): Comment form, Table of Road Segments, Project Area Maps of Bonners Ferry, Sandpoint, and Priest Lake Ranger Districts

COMMENT FORM

Name:_____

Address:_____

Phone: _____

My comments are:

[illegible]

Please send me a copy of the final decision information on the North Zone Roadside Salvage Project_____

Please remove my name from the mailing list for the North Zone Roadside Salvage Project

Return Comment form to: Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Attn: Barry Wynsma, Project Leader
6286 Main Street
Bonners Ferry, Idaho 83805
FAX: 208-267-3732

Table 1 – Project Road Segments

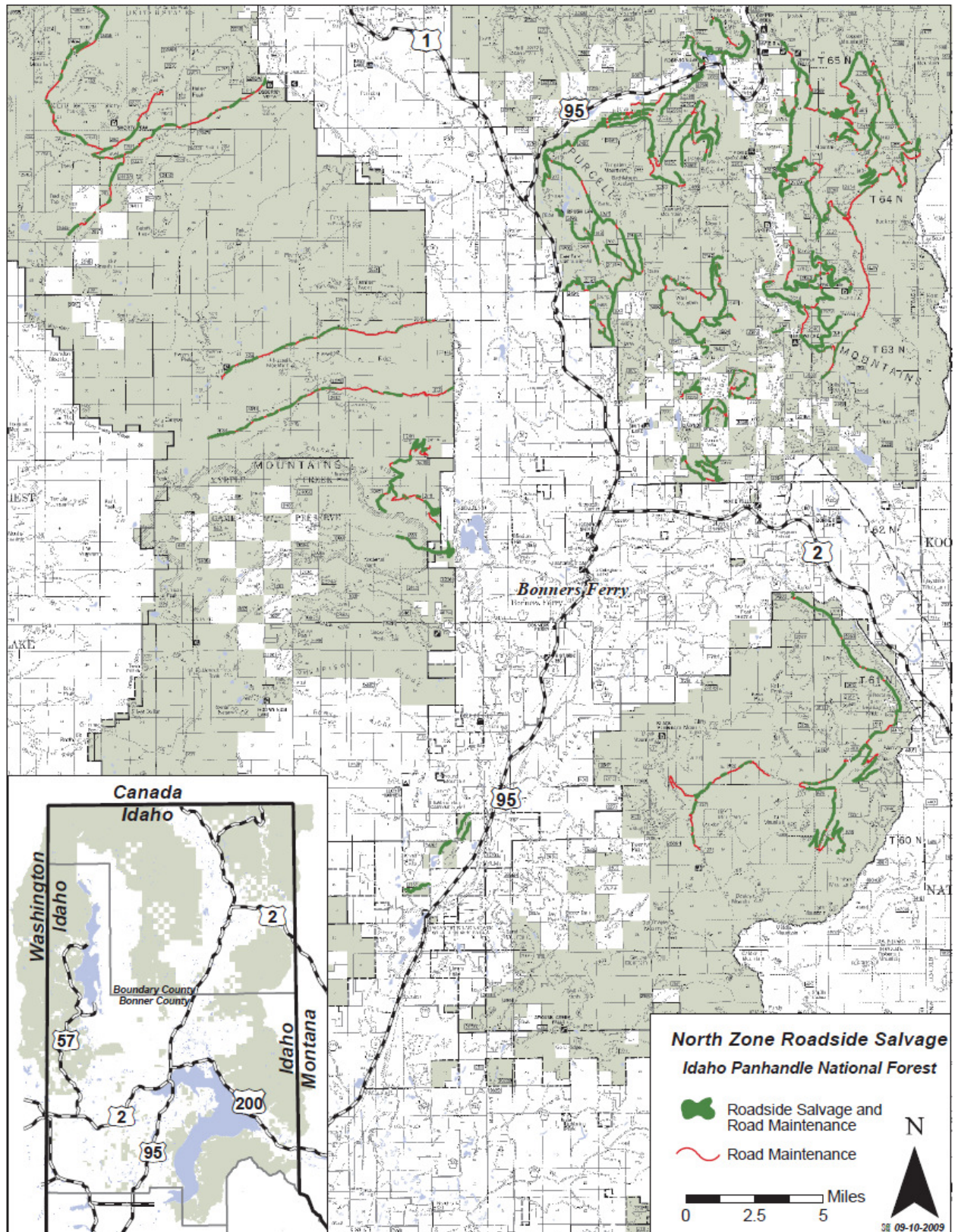
Bonners Ferry Roads				Bonners Ferry Roads			
Road Number	Maintenance Miles	Salvage Miles	Salvage Acres	Road Number	Maintenance Miles	Salvage Miles	Salvage Acres
1009	0.56	0.54	46.93	2522	2.35	2.32	146.9
1374	3.09	2.05	80.27	2522A	0.79	0.79	*
1374A	1.75	1.25	37.6	2538	5.38	4.43	198.99
2021	0.49	0.49	21.92	2538A	0.9	0.77	23.06
2022	0.35	0.35	*	2538B	1.49	1.06	48.41
2173	1.42	1.28	56.49	2538C	0.68	0.68	32.91
2201	0.38	0.28	12.73	2538D	1.25	0.76	29.11
2212	2.97	1.9	93.87	2538G	0.71	0.58	24.74
2221	2.52	1.57	66.26	2540	7.02	4.66	277.8
2251	0.15			2540A	0.47	0.47	*
2259	3.76	2.58	106.23	2541	2.41	1.89	80.7
2259B	0.9	0.9	59.76	2542	8.29	7.31	329.32
2266	6.21	4.88	216.38	2542A	0.72	0.52	*
2266D	1.61	1.12	51.39	2570	1.82	1.76	96.32
2266E	1.91	1.67	51.18	2571	0.71	0.71	34.12
2266F	1.47	1.29	63.34	2572	1.69	1.62	22.89
2266G	1.25	1.25	47.12	2572A	1.68	1.32	52.51
2266H	0.87	0.87	29.45	2573	5.3	4.48	204.71
2274	0.72	0.65	29.61	2596	0.62	0.62	39.38
229A	0.99	0.67	55.99	2596B	0.98	0.98	46.3
229X	0.66	0.53	*	2596D	0.72	0.72	35.98
2411	8.57	5.85	208.44	2596E	0.25	0.25	*
2411A	2.51	1.35	78.14	2692	1.4	1.21	42.78
2421	3.32	2.45	97.83	273	1.4	1.28	44.81
2446	0.93	0.53	25.57	273A	0.5	0.5	28.81
2454	6.13	2.95	106.25	2765	1.15	1.15	53.12
2454A	0.1	0.04	3.21	2781	2.82	2.41	132.8
2455	2.54	1.67	73.84	2781C	0.49	0.49	*
2485	8.98	7.65	431.99	2782	3.26	2.19	95.77
2485A	0.74	0.57	28.02	281	9.28	4.68	183.81
2488	3.01	2.47	96.55	282	3.8	1.47	56.68
2491	1.93	1.75	78.75	314	12.4	9.77	441.23
2491B	1.2	1.2	58.13	397	10.84	9.64	421.31
2491C	0.39	0.24	3.84	397J	1.55	1.28	49.25
2493	0.37	0.35	18.53	403	12.53	9.78	355.26
2494	3.58	3.12	113.36	408	8.35	3.76	172.55
2496	2.15	1.68	66.2	427	2.36	1.09	30.88
2496A	0.31	0.16	7.08	432	10.05	4.89	188.31
2499	0.37	0.31	*	435	13.89	4.87	140
2499A	1.44	1.3	57.81	449	1.23	0.96	37.66
2509	9.18	6.01	337.09	628	6.45	4.83	236.86
2509UG	0.15			628A	0.59	0.59	83.23
2517	12.69	9.55	464.28	633	2.95	2.83	135.13
2517A	2.07	1.81	59.05	634	8.5	3.8	27.27
2517B	0.75	0.69	18	655	1.35	0.81	67.95
2517E	0.92	0.91	*	871	1.48	1.02	54.83
2517F	0.45	0.29	*				

Priest Lake Roads				Sandpoint Roads			
Road Number	Maintenance Miles	Salvage Miles	Salvage Acres	Road Number	Maintenance Miles	Salvage Miles	Salvage Acres
1075	6.85	5.68	245.13	1021	9.12	8.56	383.54
1089	2.48	1.87	32.35	1022	2.06	1.16	37.91
1092	9.35	8.16	372.7	1066	3.45	3.43	157.7
1094	6.33	5.18	214.01	1088	0.25	0.09	3.01
1098	11.64	10.44	443.6	1091	3.88	3.68	155.77
1108	4.25	1.2	20.62	1180	3.33	2.01	87.03
1301	4.19	3.17	132.88	2294	2.27	1.59	67.8
1314	6.09	5.52	234	2294B	1.59	1.32	47.96
1347	7.84	5.67	229.7	2294C	2.41	2.02	83.72
1362	12.72	8.79	378.68	2294D	0.48	0.16	*
2730	6.85	3.76	163.94	2294UC	0.21	0.21	*
305	9.74	6.5	227.15	232	10.12	7.22	317.56
312	16.48	11.23	480.62	2611	3.63	3.23	151.59
313	5.61	4.24	196.68	2640	2.11	1.69	79.45
318	4.71	3.54	125.51	2684	1.3	1.09	49.82
3215	0.11	0.11	*	2706	8.8	7.32	436.4
333	6.64	1.6	54.41	2711	3.78	3.78	139.65
333B	3.92	2.96	101.17	275	12.04	7.1	266.11
638	9.31	2.88	110.21	278	31.95	23.79	910.63
639	17.43	14.9	649.96	293	11.67	10.6	483.38
659	6.64	4.9	272.86	**332	35.25	32.48	672.3
984	4.87	4.87	229.75	**332A	3.69	3.69	75.08
				419	14.99	1.63	53.85

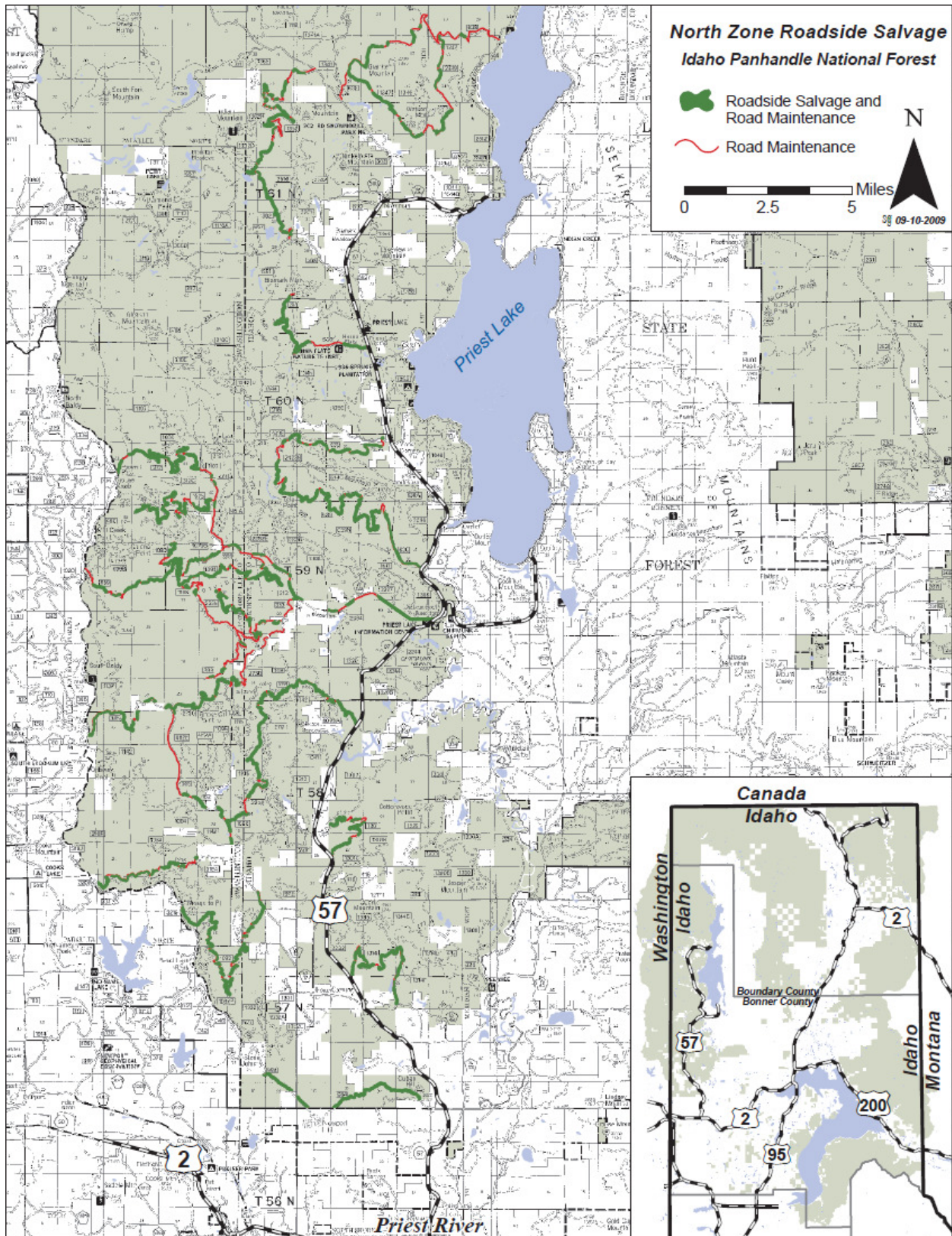
* - acres are included in another road #

** RD 332 and 332A go in and out of the Sandpoint RD.
Miles are for the entire RD. Acres are only what is on the Sandpoint RD.
Additional Acres - 867ac on 332; 111ac on 332A

Map 1 – Bonners Ferry Ranger District Roads



Map 2 – Priest Lake Ranger District Roads



Map 3 – Sandpoint Ranger District Roads

